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Message Text

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61
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66612
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 195260

ATHENS FOR EAGLETON

FOLLOWING REPEAT DACCA 3964 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ISLAMABAD KATHMANDU
NEW DELHI CALCUTTA AND CINCPAC 16 AUG 75

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3964

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, BG, US, IN, UR, CH, XD
SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY COMMENT ON THE COUP IN BANGLADESH

1. THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS GIVE PROMISE
THAT THE COUP WHICH BEGAN AT 0515 LOCAL TIME ON AUGUST 15
WILL NOT BE CHALLENGED. THE OATHS OF FEALTY TO THE NEW
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GOVERNMENT SWORN BY THE SERVICE CHIEFS, THE HEADS OF THE
PARAMILITARY BANGLADESH RIFLES AND RAKKHI BAHINI AND
THE HEAD OF THE POLICE BRING ALL ARMED ELEMENTS INTO
SUPPORT OF THE NEW REGIME. THE PUBLIC HAS DISPLAYED NO

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PARTICULAR JIBILATION AT THE FALL OF MUJIB BUT RATHER A
CALM ACCEPTANCE, AND PERHAPS SOME SENSE OF RELIEF. THE
RELATIVE EASE WITH WHICH POWER HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED
SUGGESTS ABOVE ALL THE DEGREE TO WHICH MUJIB AND THE
BANGALEES HAD BECOME ALIENATED FROM ONE ANOTHER, THE
BANGALEES FROM MUJIB BECAUSE OF HIS FAILURE TO MEET THEIR
ASPIRATIONS AND HIS APPARENT DESIRE TO HOLD POWER LARGELY
FOR PERSONAL AGRANDIZEMENT AND DYNASTIC REASONS, AND MUJIB
FROM THE BANGLAEES AS HE GREW MORE ISOLATED FROM OBJECTIVE
COUNSELS AND BEGAN TO SUFFER THE CLASSIC PARANOIA OF THE
DESPOT. THE QUICKENING TEMPO OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S EFFORTS
SINCE EARLY JUNE TO INSURE HIS STRANGLEHOLD ON POWER,
TOGETHER WITH THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF HIS NEPHEW SHEIKH
MONI, DOUBTLESS MADE THE COUP PLOTTERS CONCLUDE THAT NO
FURTHER DELAYS IN TAKING ACTION WAS POSSIBLE. THAT INDIA'S
INDEPENDENCE DAY WAS CHOSEN MAY HAVE BEEN MERELY INCIDENTAL, BUT
WE NOTE THE COINCIDENCE.

2. IT IS TOO EARLY TO OFFER ANY SURE OPINIONS ON THE
DIRECTION OF EVENTS. THE NEW CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT UNDER
KHONDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED SEEMS LITTLE LIKELY TO AROUSE
ANY SENSE OF ENTHUSIASM. ALTHOUGH PURGED--BY DEATH OR
EXCLUSION--OF THOSE WHO WERE CLOSEST TO SHEIKH MUJIB, IT
IS STILL A COLLECTION OF OVERLY FAMILIAR FIGURES WHO ARE
IDENTIFIED WITH THE POOR ADMINISTRATION OF POST-LIBERATION
BANGLADESH. CLEARLY, ITS COMPOSITION IS INTENDED TO SUGGEST
THAT BANGLADESH UNDER MUSHTAQUE WILL OFFER CONTINUITY, BUT
ALSO THAT THERE WILL BE GREATER MODERATION. MUSHTAQUE'S
RADIO ADDRESS LATE ON AUGUST 15 (DACCA 3955) SUPPORTS THIS
VIEW, CONDEMNING AS IT DOES THE DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES
OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S RULE BUT CLEARLY SUGGESTING THAT
INSOFAR AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE CONCERNED, BUSINESS WILL
BE MUCH AS USUAL. THERE IS ALREADY SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE
NEW GOVERNMENT WILL WANT TO STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH THE
MUSLIM WORLD, INCLUDING PAKISTAN. AT THE SAME TIME,
MUSHTAQUE'S WELL-KNOWN ANTIPATHY TO INDIA NOTWITHSTANDING,
THE NEW REGIME WILL NOT WANT TO AROUSE UNDUE SUSPICIONS ON
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THE PART OF INDIA, CLEARLY COGNIZANT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF
PRESERVING AN ADEQUATE MEASURE OF GOODWILL ON THE PART OF
ITS IMPOSING NEIGHBOR. (PERHAPS ONE REASON FOR THE
COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET, WITH ITS EXCLUSIVE RELIANCE
ON OLD FACES, IS A HOPE TO DEMONSTRATE TO INDIA ITS BASIC
CONTINUITY.) INSOFAR AS THE MAJOR POWERS ARE CONCERNED,
MUSHTAQUE HAS STATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH
"CLOSER AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE BIG POWERS LIKE
THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA." THIS WOULD
SEEM TO MEAN MORE BALANCE IN ITS RELATIONS, AND THUS SOME
DIMINUTION IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

3. THE EVIDENCE SO FAR SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT

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OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT COULD TURN OUT TO BE ON AN EVEN MORE CORDIAL BASIS THAN THEY WERE UNDER MUJIB. THE NEW PRESIDENT HAS IN THE PAST BEEN STRIKINGLY OVERT IN SUGGESTING HIS "PRO-AMERICAN" ATTITUDE; MOREOVER, THE FIGURES IN THE OLD REGIME WHO WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR LEFTIST AND ANTI-AMERICAN VIEWS (SHEIKH MONI AND SAMAD, EXAMPLE) ARE NOW GONE. THE POSSIBILITY IS ALSO STRONG THAT THEY WILL LOOK TO US FOR EVEN LARGER AMOUNTS OF AID--MUSHTAQUE HAS ARGUED WITH US BEFORE THAT WE ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN TRULY HELP BANGLADESH--SO THAT OUR PROBLEM MAY WELL PROVE TO BE ONE OF TEMPERING THE NEW REGIME'S EXPECTATIONS OF US.

4. WE CANNOT PRESENTLY JUDGE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSHTAQUE'S GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY. WE NOTE WITH INTEREST THAT EVERY OFFICIAL STATEMENT STRESSES THE ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE TAKEOVER. WE ARE TOLD THAT THEY MILITARY ARE AT PRESENT ENGAGED IN PREPARING MARTIAL LAW ORDERS WHICH WOULD, IF THE PAKISTANI PATTERN IS FOLLOWED, SERVE AS BASIS LAW OF THE COUNTRY. WHETHER THIS MEANS A GROWTH OF TENSION BETWEEN THE CIVILIANS AND THE MILITARY WE CANNOT YET SAY, BUT WE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ONE OF THE FIRST STATEMENTS BY MUSHTAQUE WOULD HAVE BEEN A PROMISE OF A NEW, MORE LIBERAL CONSTITUATION THAN THAT IMPOSED LAST JANUARY BY MUJIB. THE CIVILIANS PROBABLY HAVE A MOMENTARY ADVANTAGE IN LIGHT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE; MOREOVER, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MILITARY'S SUCCESSFUL OUSTER OF MUJIB, WE ARE LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT CONFIDENTIAL

THE COUP PLANNERS PREPARED FOR LITTLE BEYOND THE EVENT ITSELF. HOWEVER, THE MILITARY--AND BY THIS WE MEAN THE YOUNGER OFFICERS WHO PLANNED AND LED COUP--DID WORK THE OVERTHROW OF SHEIKH MUJIB, AND WE SUSPECT THAT, HAVING TASTED BLOOD, THEY WILL WANT AT THE VERY LEAST TO EXERCISE SOME MEASURE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE COURSE OF EVENTS. WE HAVE NO REASON TO LOOK FOR BANGALEE QUADDAFIS AMONG THE COUP PLANNERS; RATHER, AS MEMBERS OF THE OLD, SERVICE-ORIENTED MIDDLE CLASS WHICH WAS THREATENED BY SHEIKH MUJIB, THEY MAY PROVE A MORE MODERATE FORCE THAN HAS BEEN SEEN IN EAST BENGAL SINCE PAKISTANI PERIOD.

5. ONE POINT TO BE EMPHASIZED IS THAT, WHILE THE OVERTHROW OF SHEIKH MUJIB WAS SUCCESSFUL, IF BLOODLY, A GREAT DEAL REMAINS TO BE DONE. MUSHTAQUE'S SPEECH IS SIGNIFICANT LARGELY FOR ITS GENERALITIES AND ITS ECHOES OF EARLIER AWAMI LEAGUE RHETORIC, BUT CONCRETE ACTIONS HAVE SO FAR BEEN FEW. WE ARE NOT SURPRISED THAT THE DEGREE OF DIRECTION DISPLAYED SO FAR IS LIMITED FOR WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT THOSE PRIVY TO THE PLANNING OF THE COUP WERE SMALL IN NUMBER AND THUS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PREPARING ANY ELABORATE PLANS FOR THE GOVERNACE OF BANGLADESH WAS VERY

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SMALL. HOWEVER, UNLESS EARLY STEPS ARE TAKEN TO DEMONSTRATE VIGOR AND WILL, THE ADVANTAGE NOW HELD BY THE NEW REGIME WILL BEGIN TO DIMINISH, AN WE MAY CONFRONT AN UNSETTLED--AND UNSETTLING--SITUATION AS CONTENDERS FOR POWER EMERGE. NO ONE NOW ON THE BANGLAEE POLITIICAL STAGE HAS KIND OF COMMANDING PERSONALITY WHICH SUSTAINED SHEIKH MUJIB FOR SO LONG. THE CIVLIAM GOVERNMENT FALTERS, WE MAY FIND THE MILITARY CONCLUDING THAT IS MUST AGAIN SAVE THE NATION. BOSTER

UNQUOTE. SISCO

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